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Book by Local Authors Is Common Read for Armstrong Freshmen

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Tom Kohler and Susan Earl

Book by Local Authors Is Common Read for Armstrong Freshmen

Authors will host free event on campus on September 1

(August 20, 2010) Waddie Welcome & the Beloved Community, a 2004 book written by Savannahians Tom Kohler and Susan Earl that tells the story of a local resident born with cerebral palsy and the community that rallied behind him, is the focus of Armstrong Atlantic State University's common read for incoming freshmen students.

At noon on Wednesday, September 1, the authors will give a multimedia presentation about their book in the Student Union's Ogeechee Theater, on the Armstrong campus. The event is free and open to the public.

Kohler, coordinator of Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy, and Earl, manager of St. Joseph's/Candler's SOURCE, co-authored the book, which received the 2005 Collaboration Award from the International Association of People with Severe Handicaps. Illustrated with more than 50 photographs, the book recounts the life of Waddie Welcome, a resident of Savannah's Cuyler-Brownsville neighborhood, and his later-in-life struggle to leave nursing homes behind and return to his beloved neighborhood, building in the process a growing network of community supporters.

The Common Read is the centerpiece of Armstrong's [First Year Experience](#) initiative, which offers programs designed to help freshmen students make a successful transition from high school into college and better prepare them to deal with the academic rigors of university life.

A second printing of the book was issued in 2010 to meet demand for the Common Read. All Armstrong freshmen are required to read the book. Faculty and students across all academic disciplines will incorporate the book into classroom discussions during the fall and spring semester.

Kohler helped raised several thousand dollars from local residents to lower the cost of the book for students.

There are so many connections among people in Savannah and between the university and the city in this book, said Jane Rago, AASU instructor of [English](#) and a coordinator for the First Year Experience program. This will make for an extraordinary common read for students. It involves a man with cerebral palsy, the breakdown of the healthcare system, citizen advocacy, and ordinary people doing extraordinary things.



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